

Healthcare Mental Health Toolkit

Healthcare providers are trained to help others, often at the expense of their own well-being. You are amazing, and we need all that you bring to help others. We also need you to sustain that care over time. This means that you will need to include yourself in the care you provide to others. This toolkit includes specialized ideas for support, guidance, and resources to create a mental health plan for your long-term success.

- ❏ This toolkit was created by Dr. Kelly Holder, a health psychologist and mental health advocate, based on the unique needs of the healthcare environment. These resources are a good beginning for caring for yourself, your team, and your organization.

Understanding Your Own Needs

The Challenge We Face

You are acutely aware of others' needs, but how aware are you of the support you are needing? This question lies at the heart of sustainable healthcare practice. The very skills that make you exceptional at caring for others—deep empathy, vigilant attention, tireless dedication—can become barriers to recognizing your own needs.

Take a moment to reflect. When was the last time you truly checked in with yourself, not as a provider, but as a human being who deserves care and compassion?

Self-Neglect

Skipping meals, missing sleep, postponing your own medical appointments—small sacrifices that accumulate into significant health concerns over time.

Too Busy to Slow Down

A perpetual state of urgency where pausing feels impossible, and your calendar controls you rather than the other way around.

Loved Ones' Concerns

Family and friends notice changes in you—exhaustion, irritability, withdrawal—and express worry about your well-being.

Fear of Stopping


Anxiety about what might happen if you slow down, rest, or set boundaries. The weight of responsibility feels crushing.

Noticing Errors

Small mistakes creeping into your work, difficulty concentrating, or moments where your usual sharp judgment feels clouded.

Experiencing Bias

Facing discrimination, microaggressions, or prejudice from patients or colleagues based on your identity, background, or role—adding an invisible burden to already demanding work.

 **Remember:** These signs aren't personal failings, but a reflection of a broken healthcare system. The care you take for yourself and your advocacy can help repair the system for everyone.

Healthcare Professionals: We're All in This Together

Every role in healthcare carries unique stressors and challenges, yet we share a common commitment to healing and service. Understanding the specific pressures faced across different healthcare disciplines helps us build empathy, create better support systems, and recognize that mental health challenges can affect anyone in our field, regardless of their position or credentials.



Physicians

Diagnostic responsibility, life-and-death decisions, long training periods, administrative burdens, and the weight of patient outcomes.



Nursing

Direct patient care, emotional labor, shift work challenges, and often being the first line of patient advocacy while managing complex medical situations.



Mental Health Providers

Psychologists, social workers, and counselors carry the emotional weight of others' trauma while managing their own mental health needs.



Allied Health Professionals

Physical therapists, respiratory therapists, laboratory technicians, and others provide essential specialized care with often limited recognition.



Hospital and Medical Office Staff

Receptionists, medical assistants, billing specialists, and administrative teams face patient frustrations and system complexities daily.

Joy as a Solution: Reclaiming What Makes Healthcare Meaningful



Defining Joy in Healthcare

Joy in healthcare isn't about forced positivity or ignoring real challenges; rather, it's about reconnecting with the deep purpose that drew us to this field. It's found not only in the triumphs—a patient's grateful smile, a successful team collaboration, a clear diagnosis, or a simple human connection—but also in the profound meaning derived from sharing in suffering. This includes witnessing death, loss, and being present for people on their absolute worst days.

True joy in healthcare is, therefore, a complex tapestry where gratitude quietly accompanies sorrow. It is the satisfaction of engaging in profoundly meaningful work, the fulfillment of using our skills to help others, and the pride in doing difficult, painful, yet essential work. This deep appreciation for being present during moments of vulnerability is what sustains us through the hardest times and reminds us of our enduring purpose, affirming that joy and sorrow can indeed coexist.

Steps to Bring Joy into Your Work and Patient Care

01

Identify Your Joy Moments

Keep a brief daily log of moments that bring you satisfaction or fulfillment. Notice patterns in what energizes versus depletes you.

02

Create Intentional Pauses

Build micro-breaks into your day—even 60 seconds to breathe, look out a window, or appreciate a positive moment can reset your nervous system.

03

Connect with Colleagues

Share positive stories with your team. Celebrate small wins together. Seek and receive support for difficult situations. Human connection is a powerful antidote to burnout.

04

Set One Boundary

Choose one area where you can protect your time or energy. Start small and practice saying "no" to what doesn't serve you or your patients.

05

Personalize Your Space

Add something meaningful to your workspace—a photo, a quote, or an object that reminds you of your purpose and values.


06

Practice Gratitude

End each shift by identifying three specific things you're grateful for, no matter how small. This rewires your brain toward noticing the positive.

Learn More About Solving for Joy

Dr. Chrissy Ott explores how healthcare providers can reclaim joy and build sustainable careers through her podcast: [Solving For Joy](#). Her insights offer practical strategies grounded in real healthcare experiences.

 Interested in receiving a free 90 Day Joy Journey Journal? Visit kellydholder.com/the-joy-minded

Essential Resources for Healthcare Mental Health

You don't have to navigate these challenges alone. A growing network of organizations understands the unique mental health needs of healthcare providers. These resources offer everything from crisis support to peer connection, professional guidance to systemic advocacy. Each organization listed here was created by or for healthcare providers who understand exactly what you're experiencing.



Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes Foundation

Named after an emergency physician who died by suicide, this foundation works to reduce stigma and improve mental health support for healthcare workers.

[Visit Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes Foundation](#)



Physician Health Programs

State-based programs providing confidential support for physicians dealing with mental health, substance use, or professional concerns.

[Visit Federation of State Physician Health Programs](#)



ALL IN: WellBeing First for Healthcare

A national movement committed to improving healthcare worker wellbeing through systemic change and evidence-based interventions.

[Visit ALL IN for Healthcare](#)



Psychiatry.org Well-Being Resources

Comprehensive resources from the American Psychiatric Association specifically designed for mental health professionals and all healthcare providers.

[Visit Well-Being Resources](#)

More Support Networks and Crisis Resources

Physician Support Line

A confidential crisis line staffed by psychiatrists who understand physician culture. Available 24/7 for immediate support.

[Access Physician Support Line](#)

Don't Clock Out

Peer support specifically designed for healthcare workers, creating safe spaces to process difficult experiences with colleagues who truly understand.

[Visit Don't Clock Out](#)

PeerRxMed

Physician peer support network based on the principle that "no one cares alone." Connecting doctors through shared experiences.

[Visit PeerRxMed](#)

Doctors and Litigation Support

Specialized support for physicians facing the unique stress of medical litigation and malpractice concerns.

[Visit Doctors and Litigation](#)

Frontline Connect

An American Psychiatric Association Foundation initiative providing free, confidential support for frontline healthcare workers.

[Learn About Frontline Connect](#)

NAMI Peer Support Resources

National Alliance on Mental Illness resources specifically tailored for frontline healthcare professionals.

[Visit NAMI Peer Support](#)

Clinician Resilience and Well-Being (NAM)

National Academy of Medicine's comprehensive program addressing systemic factors affecting healthcare worker wellness.

[Visit NAM Clinician Resilience](#)




Is there someone you know who could benefit from these resources?

When You're in Crisis: Immediate Support

If you're experiencing a mental health crisis, please know that help is available right now. Crisis doesn't mean failure—it means you're human, working in an extraordinarily demanding field. The most courageous thing you can do is reach out for support.

Physician Support Line Call 1-888-409-0141 to speak with a psychiatrist who understands physician culture. Completely confidential.	National Nurses Crisis Center Call 1-888-677-7654 for confidential support specifically for nurses. Visit nursecrisis.org for resources and immediate help.	Crisis Text Line Text HELLO to 741741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor. Available 24/7 for immediate text-based support.
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Call or text 988 for immediate support, 24/7. Free, confidential crisis counseling available to everyone.		

 **Your Privacy Matters:** All crisis resources listed here are confidential. Seeking help is a sign of strength and professional responsibility, not weakness.

"The healthcare system needs you. But it needs you whole, healthy, and sustainable. Taking care of yourself isn't selfish—it's essential for the patients who depend on you and the profession that needs your continued contributions."

One Step Toward Caring for Yourself

Self-care in healthcare isn't about bubble baths and spa days—though those are nice. It's about sustainable practices that protect your mental health so you can continue doing the work you love. The key is starting small. You don't need to overhaul your entire life; you need one manageable step that you can take today.



Choose Your First Step

Select one action from the list below that feels achievable this week. Not five things, not a complete transformation—just one concrete step toward better self-care. Once this becomes a habit, you can add another.

Six Self-Care Steps You Can Start Today

1 Schedule One Non-Negotiable Break

Put a 15-minute break on your calendar daily. Treat it with the same importance as a patient appointment. Use it to step outside, eat mindfully, or simply breathe.

2 Establish a Post-Shift Ritual

Create a simple transition between work and home—change clothes, take five deep breaths in your car, or listen to a favorite song. This helps your nervous system shift out of high-alert mode.

3 Connect with One Support Person

Identify someone you can talk to honestly about work stress—a colleague, therapist, mentor, or friend. Schedule regular check-ins, even if brief.

4 Set One Technology Boundary


Choose a time when you'll disconnect from work emails and messages. Start with just one hour before bed or during meals.

5 Move Your Body Intentionally

Even 10 minutes of movement—stretching, walking, or dancing to one song—can significantly reduce stress hormones and improve mood.

6 Practice Saying "No"

Decline one request this week that doesn't align with your priorities or capacity. You can say no with grace: "I appreciate you thinking of me, but I don't have the bandwidth right now."

 Which is the easiest step to try today? Need additional support? Visit kellydholder.com

One Step Toward Caring for Your Team

Individual wellbeing is important, but lasting change happens when we support each other. As a healthcare provider, you have unique power to positively impact your team's mental health. Small actions of solidarity and care create ripple effects that can transform workplace culture. You don't need to be in leadership to make a difference—peer support is often the most powerful intervention.



Start One Vulnerable Conversation

Share your own struggles or challenges with a colleague. When you normalize discussion about mental health, you create safety for others to do the same. Try: "I've been feeling overwhelmed lately. Have you experienced this too?"



Recognize a Colleague's Effort

Take 30 seconds to acknowledge someone's hard work, skill, or compassion. Specific appreciation is powerful: "I noticed how patient you were with that difficult situation. That was impressive."



Offer Practical Support

When you see someone struggling, offer concrete help: "Can I take that next patient so you can take a break?" or "Want to decompress together for five minutes?" Actions speak louder than "Let me know if you need anything."



Initiate a Team Check-In

Suggest starting shifts or meetings with a brief wellbeing check. Simple questions like "How's everyone doing today—really?" or "What's been challenging this week?" build connection and awareness.



Advocate for a Team Member

If you notice someone being treated unfairly or overwhelmed, speak up or help them access resources. Stand beside colleagues who are struggling rather than staying silent.

Remember: team care isn't about fixing everyone's problems or becoming an informal therapist. It's about creating an environment where people feel seen, supported, and less alone in their struggles. Small gestures of solidarity can be life-changing.

One Step Toward Caring for Your Organization

Systemic change feels daunting, but organizational culture shifts through accumulated individual actions. You have more influence than you might think—whether you're an intern or a department head. Healthcare worker wellbeing isn't just a personal responsibility; it's an organizational imperative that affects patient safety, quality of care, and staff retention. Your voice and actions matter.



Participate in Wellness Surveys

When your organization asks for feedback about wellbeing, burnout, or workplace culture, respond honestly. Anonymous feedback data drives institutional change and resource allocation.



Join or Form a Wellness Committee

Volunteer for existing wellbeing initiatives or propose creating one. Even informal lunch groups discussing workplace mental health can evolve into influential voices for change.



Name the Problem Constructively

When you see systemic issues—unsafe staffing, excessive administrative burden, lack of support—document and report them through appropriate channels. Frame concerns around patient safety and quality care.



Request Specific Resources

Ask leadership for concrete support: peer support programs, access to counseling, adequate break spaces, or protected time for wellbeing activities.



If you need support bringing mental health awareness and tools to your team, visit kellydholder.com for additional resources or invite Dr. Kelly Holder to help. You can contact her via email: kholder@kellydholder.com

Your Journey Forward

Start the Conversation

Share this toolkit with colleagues and leadership. Present data on healthcare worker mental health at meetings. Invite organizational leaders to engage with evidence-based wellbeing initiatives. Change begins with awareness.

Organizations that invest in provider wellbeing see improved patient outcomes, reduced errors, lower turnover, and better staff morale. This isn't a zero-sum game—supporting providers ultimately supports everyone.



Your Journey Forward

Sustainable healthcare careers require intentional mental health practices at every level—personal, interpersonal, and institutional. You deserve support, rest, and joy in your work. The care you extend to others must extend to yourself. Start with one step today, and remember: seeking help isn't weakness, it's wisdom. You matter, not just for what you do, but for who you are.

 **Please Share** Visit kellydholder.com for more resources